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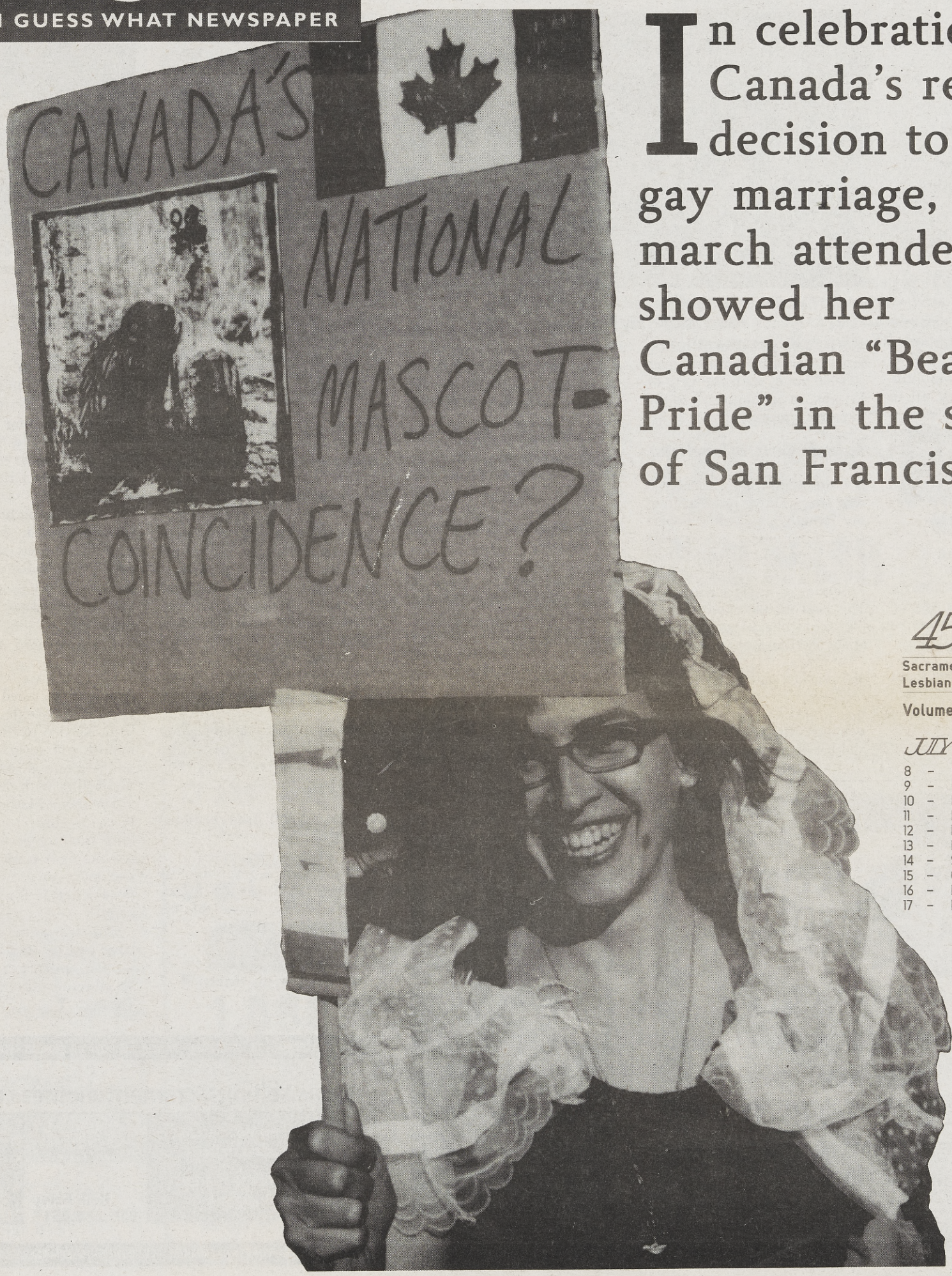


In celebration of Canada's recent decision to allow gay marriage, one march attendent showed her Canadian "Beaver Pride" in the streets of San Francisco.

MGW / Darcy Totten

459

Sacramento's Premier Gay & Lesbian Newspaper Since 1978

Volume 26 ▼ Issue # 459

JULY 15, 2003

8 – ENTERTAINMENT
9 – LOCALS
10 – DOMES
11 – DOMES
12 – HIV NEWSLINE
13 – LOCAL
14 – SPEAKOUT
15 – OUT LAUGHING
16 – BUS. DIRECTORY
17 – LOCAL

2003

Entertainment

Just For Laughs...a Little BUSHIT!

Former MGW Food Editor Randy Hartly sent this parody our way. Enjoy.

Resume:
George Walker Bush

Past work experience:

- I avoided service during the Vietnam War by having my Dad get me into the Air National Guard where I did as little as I could.

- I ran for congress and lost.

- I bought an oil company, but couldn't find any oil in Texas; company went bankrupt shortly after I sold all my stock.

- With my father's help and nearly the same name, was elected Governor of Texas.

Accomplishments:

- I changed pollution laws for oil and power companies and helped make Texas the most polluted state in the nation.

- I set the record for the most criminal executions authorized by any governor in American history.

The unfurling of the 1 mile rainbow flag at the San Francisco Gay Pride Parade.

- I became president after losing the popular vote by over 500,000 votes, with the help of Republican appointments to the Supreme Court.

Accomplishments as President:

- One of my first official acts was an executive order sealing my father's presidential papers from public view just as they were supposed to be opened for such scrutiny under the Freedom of Information act. This kept scholars and journalists from checking the facts about the Iran Contra scandal.

- I attacked and took over two countries.

- I spent the country's surplus and bankrupted the treasury.

- I am the first president in US history to enter office with a criminal record.

- In my first year in office set the all-time record for most vacation days taken by any president.

- I cut health care benefits for war veterans.

- I set the all-time record for biggest annual budget spending increases, more than any president in US history, while at the same time proposing tax cuts.

- I am the first president in US history to have the United Nations remove the US from the human rights commission.

- I am the first president in US history to have the United Nations remove the US from the elections monitoring board.

- I hold the record for most corporate campaign donations.

- My biggest lifetime campaign contributor, who is also one of my best friends, presided over one of the largest corporate bankruptcy frauds in world history (Kenneth Lay, former CEO of Enron Corporation).

- I am the first US president in history to have a majority of the people of Europe (71%) view my presidency as the biggest threat to world peace and stability.

- I changed US policy to allow convicted criminals to be awarded government contracts.

- I removed more freedoms and civil liberties for Americans than any other president in US history. I decided that 10 items on the Bill of Rights was just "too much" so it is pared down to a "no nonsense" 6. No more Miranda rights and goodbye to #4-illegal search and seizure.

Records and References:

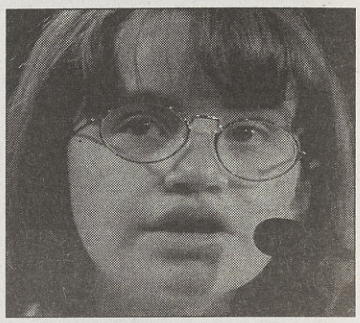
- I have at least one conviction for drunk driving in Maine (Texas driving record has been erased and is not available).

- I was AWOL from National Guard.

- Records from my tenure as governor of Texas are in my father's library, unavailable for public view.

- For personal references please speak to my daddy. ▼

Spellbound is Spellbinding



Champion Speller Angela Arenivar

Stefan Gruenwedel
MGW Staff

Jeff Blitz's Spellbound is a mesmerizing glimpse into the world of the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee, a curious, 75-year-old competition that pits hundreds of smart children against the coldhearted dictionary.

Following eight individuals through their intensive studies and drill sessions, this Academy Award-nominated documentary profiles an intriguing cross-section of youngsters from different walks of life who pursue the big trophy with equal tenacity.

Champion speller Angela Arenivar (pictured) is remarkable. Her parents immigrated from Mexico to the Texas panhandle and speak no English, so she alone is responsible for her facility with the language.

Spellbound takes a potentially tiring subject (a weekend-long spelling bee) and selects just the right moments to show just how tension-riddled the experience is for the participants.

This mesmerizing film will have you rooting for your favorite speller by the end. Spellbound plays at the Crest Theater. ▼

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Pamela Karlan to Serve on FPPC

MGW Staff

State Controller Steve Westly announced the appointment of Pamela Karlan to serve on the Fair Political Practices Commission in April 2003. According to Westly, " The FPPC is charged with ensuring the integrity of our political system...she is well suited to serve the interests of the people of California."

Karlan, a professor of public interest law at Stanford University Law School, has most recently turned her attentions to the interests of GLBT people. She filed a friend of the court brief against a Texas sodomy law, on behalf of 18 constitutional law professors. This law was recently struck down by The Supreme Court.

On the legal impact of this ruling Karlan has said in an online interview with Margaret Warner, "..The Supreme Court recognizes that gay people and straight people are equally people under the constitution...by sweeping these laws off the books, it takes away the ability of states to discriminate on the grounds that being gay is the same thing as being a criminal...I think those are the two biggest immediate impacts of the decision."

Pamela Karlan has published dozens of articles on voting rights, civil rights, affirmative action, the political process, and discrimination. She has been involved as a friend of the court and as an advocate in over 20 other Supreme Court cases. ▼

Info: www.fppc.ca.gov

Local Motorcycle Club Mellows Out

MGW / Nikki Judge

By Gerard Wing
Guest Writer

The Valley Knights is a gay motorcycle club, based in the Central Valley and founded in 1976. Its members remember the great awakening of the 70's, the increased social and political presence in the face of tragedy of the 80s and 90s, and watch a new generation of gays mature. The club fosters community, challenges stereotypes, and tries to subvert the paradigm. Club members ride motorcycles as diverse as the segments of the community from which they come.

The club received an award from the Inter-Club Fund, an organization that recognizes excellence among the leather and motorcycle clubs in Northern California as well as a first place trophy for the Best Special Event on a Run. ▼

Assembly Passes Sports License Plates Bill for Title IX

MGW Staff

The California State Assembly has approved legislation by Assembly member Lloyd E. Levine, to allow the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue collegiate and professional sports team California license plates. The revenue created from this bill will go to Title IX Compliance. The bill passed 76-1.

After receiving 7,500 applications for a specific collegiate or professional sports team, the DMV may issue a license plate to an applicant for a $100 initial fee and $80 for the renewal fee.

With the popularity of professional sports teams, such as the Monarchs and the Kings, there is an obvious demand for sports teams memorabilia.

Florida has a similar plan, which has raised $66 million in revenue over the last five years. California's large driving population, coupled with higher fees than Florida's, will generate even more revenue for Title IX. ▼

Info: www.dmv.ca.gov

LGBT CAUCUS OPPOSES RECALL

MGW / A. W. Hall

On July 8 members of the GLBT Caucus, as well as members of other organizations such as Planned Parenthood, came out to the North Steps of the Capital to publicly announce their opposition to an ongoing statewide effort to recall Governor Gray Davis.

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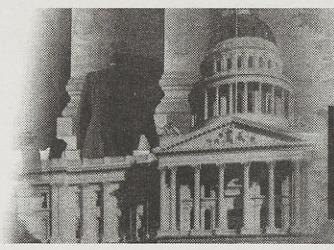

Under The Domes

NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL • NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL • NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL • NEWS FROM TH

Youth Hate Violence Rising

MGW Staff

Aaron Price, a 19-year-old former Morehouse college student was found guilty on June 11 of assault and battery charges after he beat dorm mate Gregory Love with a baseball bat in a dormitory bathroom in November. His sentence could carry up to 40 year in prison. This case was the first trial under Georgia's new Hate Crime Law and the jury continued to weigh a hate crime charge that could add five more years.

Price said he interpreted stares in a shower stall from Love as sexual advances, and claimed that when he returned to the bathroom with a baseball bat he was acting in self-defense. Love, who suffered a fractured skull in the assault, said that he did not have his glasses and mistook Price for his roommate.

Unfortunately the incident is not an isolated event, homophobic and hate violence among young people are on the rise. "In 2002 alone, we saw an 8% increase in victims of anti-GLBT crimes who were between the ages of 18 and 22, and a 164% increase in the number of reports from victims under the age of 18; many of these incidents occurred on campuses and schools," said Clarence Patton, Acting Executive Director of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. NCAVP is an organization dedicated to creating a national response to the violence plaguing the GLBT community. ▼

Info: 212.714.1184, avp.org

Rainbow Endowment Funds Eight Non-Profits

MGW Staff

The Rainbow Endowment remains one of a shrinking number of national foundations focused exclusively on the needs of the GLBT community and distributes funds contributed by its funding sponsors Subaru and Rainbow Card.

Organizations currently awarded funding from the Rainbow Endowment in 2003:

-AIDS Community Research Initiative of America (ACRIA) runs HIV/AIDS education programs.

-Advocates for Youth provides information to GLBT and questioning youth via their website youthresource.org

-Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE) provides support for children with GLBT parents.

-Gender Public Advocacy Coalition works to end discrimination caused by gender stereotypes

-Gay and Lesbian Victory Foundation educates openly GLBT individuals who enter public service and run for elected office through the Horizon State Victory Training Institute.

-In the Life Media produces a monthly GLBT newsmagazine that is broadcast on 130 television stations nationwide.

-National Association of GLBT Community Centers coordinates information and provide resources to local centers.

-Outright Radio provides a voice for the GLBT community on Public Radio International (PRI) affiliated stations. ▼

Info: 215.241.7280
rainbowendowment.org

Key West's Quest For Fantasy

MGW Staff

In Key West from October 17-26, the Island City's annual Fantasy Fest celebration will take place. The outrageous masking and costuming festival is themed "Nights of Futures Past -- 25 Years of Fantasy," and features a roster of masquerade balls, street fairs and other revelry climaxing in a lavish grand parade where more than 60,000 spectators are expected. Key West's Duval Street will be transformed into a Caribbean-flavored marketplace where attendees can find feathered masks, exotic costumes, island edibles and frosty libations. ▼

Info: 305-296-1817

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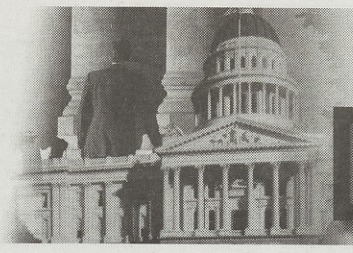

Under The Domes

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Korea Removes Homosexuality from Classification of "Harmful and Obscene"

MGW Staff

The Youth Protection Committee of South Korea removed the classification of homosexuality as "harmful and obscene" from the 1997 Youth Protection Act. The resolution ruled that prohibiting youth from accessing sites with homosexual content violates guarantees of pursuit of happiness, equality, and freedom of expression enshrined in the Korean Constitution. ▼

Info: www.youth.go.kr/englis/default.htm

Strong Women Summit Set

MGW Staff

The Stonyfield Farm Strong Women Summit will celebrate, educate, and motivate women about how positive thinking and activism begins with good health, nutrition, exercise and attitude.

Influential women from media, academic and activist organizations across the U.S. will gather to discuss and explore the many issues facing women today. Through the Strong Women Summit, women will gain a wide range of tools to help combat stress, build strength and personal power, and enhance wellness and self-esteem.

The Strong Women Summit will be held at Mohonk Mountain House, a grand 251 room Victorian Castle, located 90 miles north of New York City on the spectacular Shawangunk Ridge near New Paltz, New York. Surrounded by thousands of acres of unspoiled forest and winding trails. Mohonk provides a unique setting for relaxation and renewal of the body, mind, and spirit in a beautiful natural setting.

Stonyfield Farm the worlds largest producer of organic yogurt, is committed to educating girls and women about health and fitness, and to honoring the many ways that women stay strong in the face of everyday stress. Through the Strong Women campaign, Stonyfield Farm is inspiring women to take care of themselves, so that they may become agents of positive change in their lives, with their families, and for their communities. ▼

Info: stonyfield.com

Author To Lead Workshop

MGW Staff

Dr. Robert N. Minor, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas and Author of the book Scared Straight: Why It's So Hard to Accept Gay People and Why It's So Hard To Be Human (St. Louis: HumanityWorks!), will teach "Getting Unstuck: Making Progress on Sexual Orientation and Gender Issues" July 28-August 3 at Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center in Abiquiu, New Mexico. ▼

Info: 505-685-4333

RainbowVision Aquires 12.7 Acres in Santa Fe New Mexico

MGW Staff

In mid April RainbowVision closed on a 12.7-acre site, within Santa Fe city limits, valued at more than $2,250,00. The resort is set to be the first of its kind, offering the GLBT retirement community a place designed for their specific needs.

As 70 million baby boomers become seniors, gay seniors may wonder if mainstream senior housing facilities may not welcome same sex couples or gay singles. The planned resort is designed for health conscious, active people. The community will offer a wide variety of activities and events. Other amenities will include a wellness center, fitness center and full service dining. In addition to assisted living facilities, there will be on site health care. ▼

Info: 212-505-2900

Wal – Mart Catches Up

MGW Staff

Wal-Mart Stores announced on Tuesday that the company has expanded its non-discrimination policy to include its gay and lesbian employees. According to Mona Williams, Vice President of Communications for Wal-Mart, the most important factor in the company's decision to change its policy was a letter to senior management officials from several gay employees asking the company to change its policy on the grounds that these employees felt "excluded". The new policy will also include a revised company guideline pertaining to harassment and inappropriate conduct that will include sexual orientation and encourage reporting discriminatory behavior to management officials. Williams was quoted as saying, in regard to the new policy, that "It's the right thing to do for our employees...And it's the right thing to do for our business." ▼

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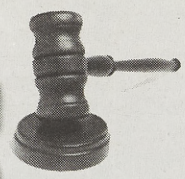
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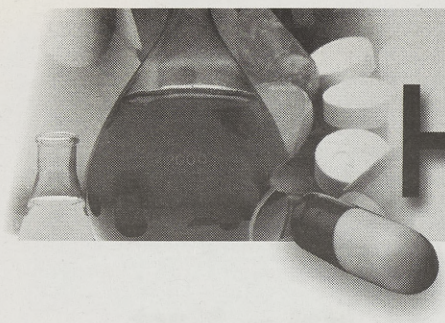

HIV Newsline

ON THE HIV FRONT • ON THE HIV FRONT • ON THE HIV FRONT • ON

On the HIV Front

By Sonya Cox
AIDS/HIV editor

Nomination includes conflict-of-interest surprise...

President Bush announced last week the nomination of Randall Tobias to run the $15 billion program to fight AIDS worldwide. Tobias is a major donor to Bush and to the Republican Party. He has little experience with AIDS issues or with Africa, and ^ as long-time chief executive and chairman of pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly ^ has fought hard against the use of generic drugs. The use of generics is of critical importance in the spending package since generic AIDS drugs can be provided for about $300 per person to desperately poor individuals in nations such as Africa (compared to the $12,000 price tag of many regimens that use brand-name AIDS meds in this country).

If confirmed by the Senate, Tobias will be given the rank of ambassador and will report directly to Secretary of State Colin Powell, with the five-year program set up as a new State Department office. Bush said Tobias would have broad influence over the government's AIDS programs and resources.

While some AIDS activists acknowledge that he possesses good management skills, the conflict-of-interest issues caught many by surprise. Most with experience in the field of AIDS say they are apprehensive about the nomination and, as noted by the executive director of the Global AIDS Alliance, concerned that "He'll be protecting the interests of the pharmaceutical industry versus cost-effective generically manufactured drugs... We're calling for a full congressional investigation to make sure there is no kickback arrangement from the Bush administration to the pharmaceutical industry."

Local HIV activists start new duties...

Sunburst Projects is pleased to announce that Julianna Tachibana and Jennifer Novak will be collaborating with them on emergency-needs programs that complement other local HIV/AIDS services in the area. Sunburst's emphasis is on family preservation, working with other service providers when a child is impacted by HIV. For many years it has run a summer camp for kids with HIV, and now manages respite child-care services, the collection of clothing and school items, family-centered case management, teen mentoring, and other programs.

Julianna and Jennifer, who recently left the Hand to Hand project after coordinating its rescue from the now defunct AIDS foundation, will also arrange fundraisers for Sunburst. Look for an "adopt a family at Christmas" program, a winter holiday gala, and other fun ways to gather tax-deductible donations for the area's families fighting HIV.

Sunburst director Mireya Herrera-Bayard invites you to volunteer for the agency, and to walk with them at the Sept 14 AIDS Walk. For more info, or to leave a message for Julianna or Jennifer, call 440-0889 (www sunburstprojects.org).

New one-a-day drug approved...

The Food & Drug Administration recently approved Emtriva, which will join other NRTI meds such as 3TC, AZT, and d4T. Gilead Sciences received approval for the once-a-day drug, and plans to immediately begin a trial to evaluate its combination with the company's other HIV drug, Viread, also taken once a day. Giliad plans to test the proposed combination pill against Combivir, rival drug maker Glaxo's once-a-day pill that combines lamivudine (3TC) and AZT. But even now, says Gilead, administering Viread and Emtriva as two separate pills will provide an effective alternative to Combivir.

HIV and 'natural' therapies can be bad combo...

Half of Americans with HIV are using alternative therapies while taking powerful AIDS cocktails, say researchers at the AIDS Healthcare Foundation in Los Angeles, and nearly one in four have selected an alternative that could interfere with their therapy. Even worse, many never mention to their physicians that they're using these additional treatments -- thinking that so-called "natural" treatments should be beneficial. In reality, however, some can be harmful, and drastically interfere with the effectiveness of their anti-retroviral drugs or create other health problems.

Herbal anti-depressant St. John's wort, for instance, lowers blood levels of protease inhibitors and, as a result, the PIs can stop working -- and HIV can even become resistant to anti-retrovirals. Garlic can have similar effects on AIDS drugs. Mega-doses of vitamins can damage the kidneys and other organs.

While AIDS care providers strongly support alternative therapies like massage, acupuncture, and relaxation techniques, along with the sensible use of multi-vitamins, the researchers recommend that folks with HIV avoid herbal remedies, mega-doses of vitamins, and other self-treatment alternatives. And be sure to tell your HIV provider about everything you take, be it headache meds, cold and allergy treatments, or other remedies, and have it included with the information in your med chart.

New plan targets those who don't know they're positive...

The Centers for Disease Control says it plans to buy nearly 250,000 OraSure rapid HIV tests for $2 million and distribute them to state health departments as part of a major HIV prevention initiative that will include outreach at rallies and other venues. The quick test is a major part of their effort to bring people who do not know they are HIV-infected into a doctor's care.

"It's tragic that more than two decades into the disease, we still have 250,000 people who don't know they have it," CDC Director Julie Gerberding said. "Our goal is to help people to know their status and get treated... Most people who know they're HIV-positive take appropriate steps to protect their partners."

"The most important aspect of this new, rapid test is that each year 10,000 people in the U.S. test positive but never return for their test results," says an AIDS official. "With the rapid test, we'll be able to give them their results in 20 minutes."

Dozens of testing events are scheduled in the U.S., "targeted at cities with large African-American and Latino populations," says an OraSure spokesperson. About 70 percent of new HIV cases are in those groups.▼

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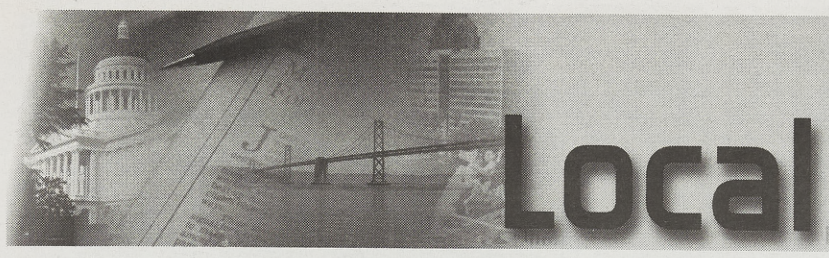

Local

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE VALLEY • HAPPENINGS AROUND THE VALLEY • HAPPENINGS AROU

Bolt Raided By Rumors, 7 Arrested For Lewd Conduct

MGW Staff

Police arrived at 2560 Boxwood Street to respond to reports of illicit sexual activity and lewd conduct in the ally between the Bolt and the adjacent warehouse. Police arrived around 10 pm and officers observed people engaged in sex acts in the ally, the police then entered through the warehouse and arrested seven people whom were cited and released on lewd conduct and illicit sexual behavior charges.

"Depending on what rumors you heard, police in riot gear raided the Bolt," said the Bolt's owner Joseph about the incident, which rumor mills quickly turned into an exaggerated story about what happened. "There was no raid on the Bolt, the police removed the people as to not disturb business."

The Bolt was not cited for any violations or misconduct for the arrests. ▼

Leather 101 Classes

MGW Staff

The Sacramento Valley Leathermen announces the beginning of a monthly education and discussion group, which will meet in a safe and welcoming space at a private residence in North Sacramento, within walking distance of the Bolt. Each class is free and open to any gay/bi/curious men who are at least 18 years of age. Classes are "adult-themed"; a valid ID may be required.

The group will start with topics aimed at those who may have little or no experience in the leather community. The first two classes will focus on basics, the history of the community and how to play safe, sane, and consensual. Each class will include a lecture or discussion led by a community member with BDSM experience and most classes will include a "how-to" demonstration or videotape presentation.

August 21st's topic: "An Introduction to Leather" will include a demonstration on basic corporal punishment, that can drive you or your lover wild with desire; however, those same things, if done in the wrong spot can cause serious damage.

September 18th's Topic: "Introduction to Leather, Part 2"

The first two classes will touch on the concept of playing "safe, sane, and consensual," using "safe words," exploring limits, and how to prepare for and negotiate play. We will also discuss the community, and its history and literature.

Join the Sacramento Valley Leathermen in exploring this fascinating, dark world and learn the safe, sane, and consensual way to play.

Classes will be held on the third Thursday of each month, beginning Thursday August 21, 2003, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

For specific directions to the classroom space or for additional information, call the SVL hotline at 486-5500 and leave a message, or email svl_club@yahoo.com ▼

LGBT High School Student awarded Leadership Scholarship

MGW Staff

The eQuality Scholarship Collaborative awarded $18,000 in college scholarships to 12 high school students last May. These scholarships are given out annually to students who demonstrate leadership in promoting equality and understanding for members of the GLBT community.

One of those students, Brianna McPherson, is a recent graduate of Mira Loma High School. She will be putting her scholarship to good use this fall as an incoming freshman at American River College. She intends to major in Political Science and Psychology. Brianna served as president of her high school's Gay Straight Alliance and helped to organize several events while serving in this capacity, including National Day of Silence and a vigil for Matthew Shepherd.

LGBT students often face many challenges when applying for scholarships in high school. The eQuality Scholarship helps businesses and community members come together to support future community leaders while providing financial support for students working on LGBT issues. ▼

Info:
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LOCAL

Speak Out

By Ed Kelley

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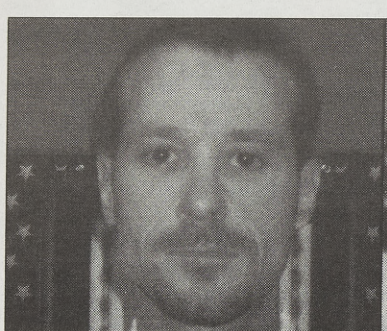
How Does the Republican Log Cabin Club Make a Difference?



Brian Schmidt

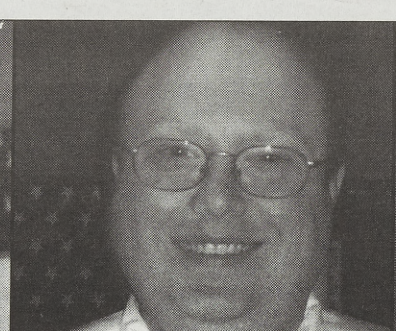
Sacramento
Data Analyst

The Log Cabin Club represents a long overdue conservative voice in the gay community.

Patrick Guerriero

Washington D.C.
National Director, Log Cabin Republicans

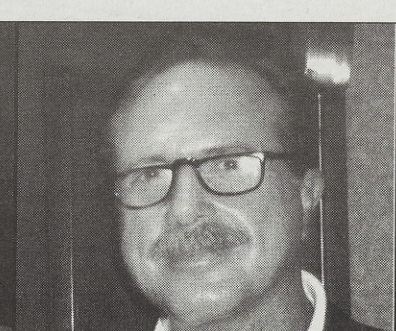
In order to advance fairness and equality for gay and lesbian Americans we need a two party strategy. Log Cabin Republicans are providing national leadership in the Republican Party.



Ken Weddle

Sacramento

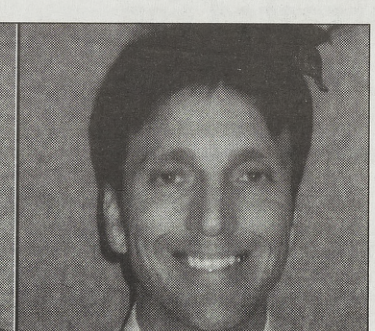
The Log Cabin Republicans are working within the party to be more inclusive in regards to gays and lesbians.



Zach Spencer

Placerville
Farmer

The Republican Log Cabin Club is making a difference just through its visibility in the straight and gay community. The Republican Party protects my rights as an individual.



Jeff Scott

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Stranger in the Night

Sally Sheklow
MGW Staff

The worst thing about the times I've been single is not having a girlfriend around to confront intruders. Not that I'm a wuss—I brave spiders, bats, snakes and door-to-door proselytizers. But there's something about a strange noise in the night that makes you want to nudge your cuddle buddy and tell her it's her turn to go see what it is.

One sweltering summer night my independence was put to the test. My apartment was so stifling I left the back door open, a habit I got into when my trusty guard dog was still alive. She'd bark at the approach of so much as a pill bug, which in my small town was about all that came around after lights out. But now that I was really alone—unless you count my cat who occasionally deigned to come in and sleep on the vacant pillow—I had no one to play Dagwood to my Blondie.

I lay down sans pajamas and sprawled across the mattress for maximum airage. Eventually the night cooled. I pulled up the cotton sheet and fell into a deep sleep.

About three in the morning I felt the cat's weight on the foot of the bed. I instinctively reached over to her pillow and petted her. My hand nestled into pussy fur (the only kind available that summer) and I drifted back to sleep. Paw steps pressed up my legs. The pressure inched its way up my torso. I stroked the cat on the pillow next to me. Something wasn't right, but my sleepy brain was Bullwinkle slow. Let's see, if my cat's on the pillow and something's walking on me . . . that something must not be the cat. A moist snurfling sound approached my face. Warm, foul breath rocketed my synapses into action.

I jerked the sheet taut and snapped whatever it was off the bed. A loud thud, then the scritch of claws scuttled across the wood floor. I jumped upright. The bedside lamp crashed down. The cat hissed and ran off, leaving me alone in the dark with whatever it was. I stood on the pillows stark naked in fierce Barbarella pose.

My heart raced. I couldn't see a thing. The light switch was unreachable, unless I dared cross the floor, upon which waited god-knows-what. I held steady at the head of the bed—hoping whatever it was wouldn't spring up and rip out my jugular.

I fumbled for the night stand drawer, twisted my mini mag lite on and scanned the room. What was that dark lump staggering between my dresser and the closet? Beady little pink-rimmed eyes glowed in the light, which cast an unmistakable shadow on the closet wall—a big, hairy possum. The creature twitched its long, scaly tail, let out a wet hiss and flashed me a Jack Nicholson grin.

That hideous stare locked onto my flashlight beam, freeing me to back off the bed and into the kitchen. I grabbed the broom and a grocery bag. Armed for battle I switched on the bedroom light.

Nobody there. Silence. Just the creepy feeling of not knowing. Where is Sigourney Weaver when you need her? Where was anybody? I couldn't exactly call 911. What was I going to say, I'd like to report an uninvited possum? I wanted to cry, to call for Popeye or Tarzan or Carol Mosely Braun.

There was no one to rescue me, no one else to rely on. I had to deal. Look, this thing is smaller and slower than you are, I told myself. It also has claws and teeth and you are stark raving naked, my self replied. Being an independent woman means being brave enough to . . . what? Wander around naked with a broom and a paper bag and a wild beast loose in my house? Yes, exactly that.

I needed a drink of water. I'd cool down and get ready for the alien to reappear. Back in the kitchen but still on code red alert, I reached for a clean glass. That's when I noticed the possum on the counter, lurking behind the dish drainer. I'm pretty sure it said, "Hello, Clarice." There it sat, with that horrible smiling face, ready to eviscerate me, or eat my eyeballs, or do whatever it is possums do to their prey.

I lost a few dinner plates in the scuffle but I finally bagged the little bugger, taped the top of the paper bag shut and set it out on the front steps—all on my own. The next morning I made sure it hadn't escaped and called the Animal Rescue team. A nice, dykey-sounding woman said possums could be relocated outside of town and they'd come pick it up right away. I reminded myself to put some clothes on before they got here.

Sally Sheklow's current girlfriend keeps the doors of their Eugene, Oregon home closed at night. They both perform with WYMPROV! the award-winning all-lesbian improve comedy troupe. Send comments to sally@wymprov.com.

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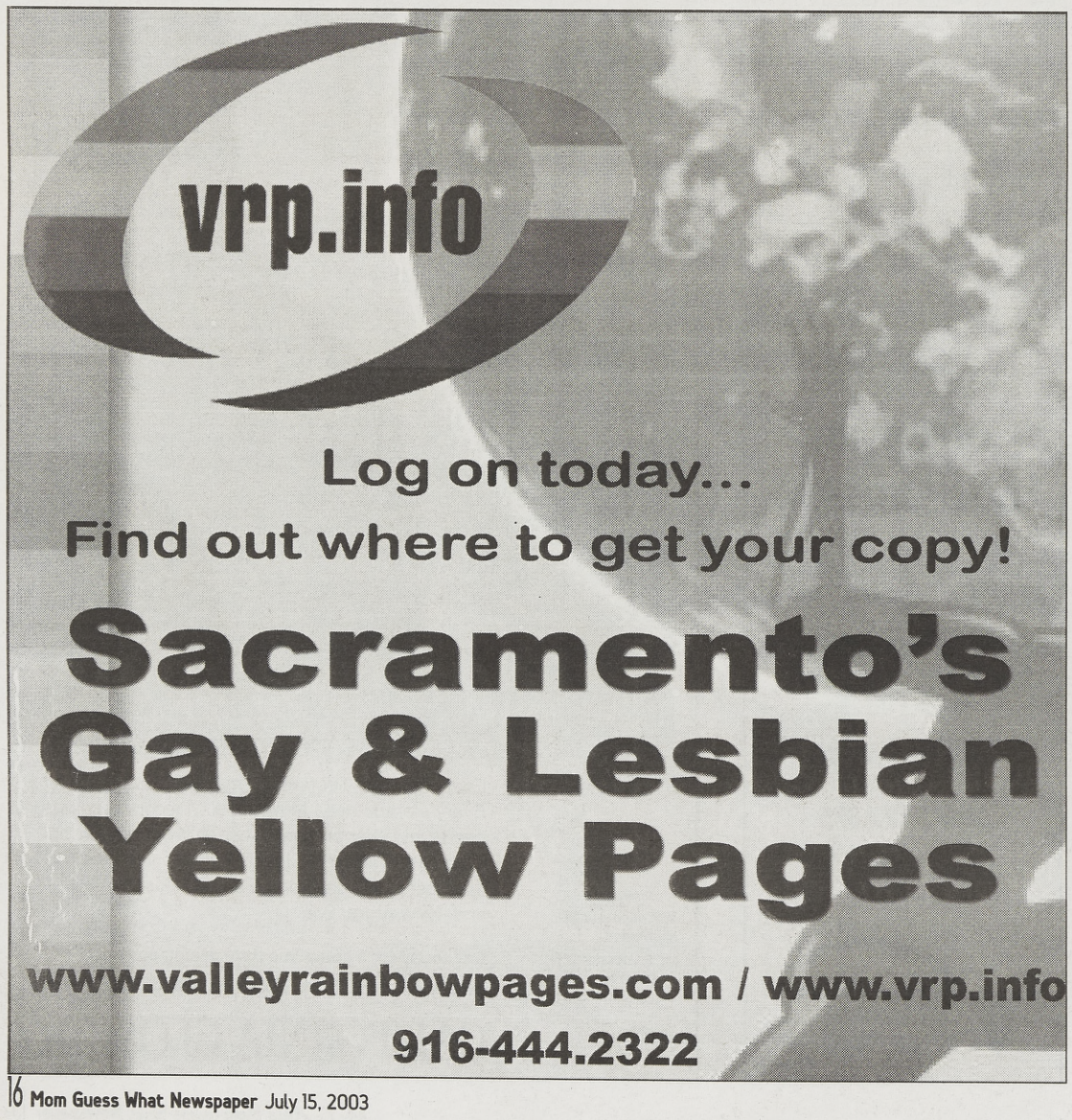

Jeepers Creepers

Stefan Gruenwedel
MGW Staff

Bugs!
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(Rated G, 45 min.)

Nature documentaries are fun to watch because they bring the out-of-reach so effortlessly to the in-front-of-couch. Sure, you can visit the zoo and see wild animals behind cages but there's nothing like a good nature show to bring you up close and personal to the beetles and the bees.

Too bad nature shows reside primarily on television. Even though the economics of film distribution might make this so, the incredible closeness you achieve in film is more or less negated by the small screen, not to mention life's ordinary distractions in the living room.

Voted 2003 Best Film by the Large Format Cinema Association and, ironically enough, "Presented by Terminix," Bugs! is your chance to see lots of bugs. Big bugs. Bugs magnified up to 250,000 times their normal (sometimes larger than I'd like to encounter in real life) size. Big bugs that pop out at you in spectacular 3D.

Narrated expertly by Judi Dench, Bugs! takes a look at the life cycle of two critters, praying mantis Hierodula and butterfly Papilio, named after their Latin genus names. Both insects are born in the same part of a virgin rainforest in Borneo, where it rains no less than 10 feet each year.

We all know how a butterfly lives the first part of its eight-week life as a ravenous caterpillar but it's quite amazing to watch it happen up close. Similarly astounding is the birth of a praying mantis as it bursts forth like some science fiction alien species from an egg case along with 200 siblings.

Insects really are an alien species to us. Their life cycles and living habits seemingly never cease to amaze. When pre-butterfly, lumbering chewing monster Papilio eats leaves all day, she puts on 100 times her weight—the equivalent for a human of growing to the size of a hippo in a couple of days. When bug hunter Hierodula mates with a female mantis who's twice his size, he must take care that she doesn't bite his head off during climax.

Considering the logistics of filming in the tropical environment that the filmmakers chose for Bugs! it's equally amazing that they were able to capture the images they did, many of them for the first time in large-format 3D: an ant drinking from a raindrop (and practically getting trapped in it), rhino beetles battling over a female, a praying mantis catching a fly, and a tarantula snatching a cricket. After months of planning these shots, they had to prepare for them and then wait for days and hours for things to happen.

One of the most riveting scenes is Papilio's emergence from her cocoon as a red and black butterfly. Shown in real time, its very slowness makes the process all the more dramatic.

Unseen, of course, is a 40-member crew and members of the local Iban tribe, who built sets, created rain storms, carried gear, and generally kept the foreigners safe in the jungle. All their work pays off handsomely. Even so, most of the extreme close-ups were filmed in a studio in Witney, Oxfordshire in England, where the crew could control conditions better than in the wild (although the heat and humidity were identical) and where they could presumably keep distractions to a minimum. It's hard to tell the difference: Everything is lit very well and is quite colorful.

Bugs! undoubtedly takes some inspiration from A Bug's Life, especially during one interlude when jazzy music accompanies several types of insects as they crawl across the screen, interact with each other, and generally cause merry mayhem. It's a nice reprieve from some of the more aggressive tactics on display.

Cute as the film tries to paint things, the world of bugs is decidedly Darwinian in the extreme. With sometimes only a few months to live, it's eat or be eaten, catch or be caught. This fact of life hits home, as one of the film's "stars" encounters all too soon.

If children are fascinated by creepy crawly things, they absolutely love Bugs!. The screening I attended included a busload of squirming, excitable kids who were happily entranced by the creatures inhabiting the large screen before them. Many of them reached out to touch what they saw floating in the air. The 3D effect is that good.

One complaint that seems to echo from viewers is the film's duration. At 45 minutes, it certainly doesn't tax the attention span of children, but to adults it seems about as brief as the lifespans of the insects depicted. Good thing IMAX theaters don't let you leave to fetch popcorn. ▼

Bugs! plays at the Esquire IMAX on K Street.
Info: www.imax.com/sacramento.

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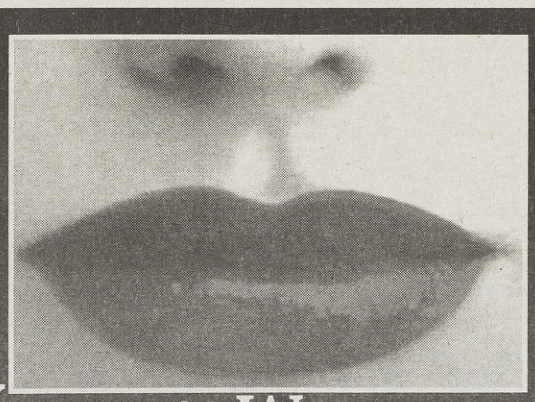
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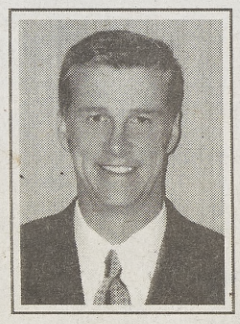

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